

The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Hasmonean State

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Chapter Six

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Reviewed by Jim West

The Pesher on Nahum has center stage at this point in Eshel's argument. In particular, he is interested in the first column of fragment 4 which he opines '... leads to the identification of the Lion of Wrath as Alexander Jannaeus' (p. 123). Comparing this passage with passages from Josephus and the Temple Scroll, '... it can be assumed that Alexander Jannaeus believed he was acting in accordance with the law when he executed the people who had invited Demetrius to wage war on Judaea, since they had delivered their own people into the hands of a foreign nation' (p. 126). This is certainly a rational explanation of the Pesher and fits nicely into the historical situation from which that Pesher arose. Eshel continues '... the author of the pesher believed that Alexander transgressed the law in the Book of Deuteronomy when he hung the Seekers-After-Smooth-Things while they were alive' (p. 128).

Eshel also looks briefly at the Pesher on Hosea B (4Q167) because '... it enables us to understand why Alexander Jannaeus was named the Lion of Wrath' (p. 130). Eshel summarizes these two peshers and their significance thusly: 'I further believe that the Pesher on Hosea was composed before the Pesher on Nahum, and that by the time the latter was composed, it had become well known that the epithet "The Lion of Wrath" referred to Alexander Jannaeus' (p. 131).

Once more, and in spite of the fear of becoming repetitious, I'll simply note that Eshel's historical reconstruction seems to be spot on. His ability to draw from a variety of sources, interpret them carefully, and apply them historically, is an astonishing thing to behold.